North Carolina state Survey results

June 30, 2014

Foreword

This report provides the comprehensive results from the Impact Survey. It describes how patrons reported having used the public access technology provided by North Carolina state libraries and the outcomes they experiences as a result. The report is divided into three sections:

- The overall results section shows how and how often respondents visit the library or the library's website, access the public access technology resources and services provided by North Carolina state libraries, and receive assistance from staff.

- The middle section shows the kinds of activities public technology users engage in across the following domains: education, employment, entrepreneurship, health and wellness, eGovernment, civic engagement, eCommerce, and social inclusion.

- Finally, the patron satisfaction and demographics section provides details on the types of patrons who completed the survey, and how satisfied they are with the technology services provided by their library.

These survey results provide a comprehensive view of how providing public access technology services at the libraries in North Carolina state benefits their communities. To help your state's libraries effectively use these results in their advocacy efforts, we invite you to visit the Impact Survey website to access a number of additional advocacy tools (http://impactsurvey.org/advocacy).

Sincerely,

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Overall results

- This report presents responses from surveys taken at 38 libraries in North Carolina between January 13, 2014 and June 29, 2014.
- A total of 5,362 people completed the survey.

Library use

5,381 (98%) of survey respondents visited a library in North Carolina state at least once in the past 12 months. Of those who did,

- **2,659 (49%)** visited the library once a week or more frequently;
- **1,886 (35%)** visited the library about 1-3 times a month;
- **836 (16%)** visited the library less than once a month.

Using the library website or online resources

4,629 (84%) of respondents accessed library resources using the computers in their library. Of those respondents,

- **1,377 (30%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **1,257 (27%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **1,995 (43%)** did so less than once a month.

4,617 (84%) of respondents accessed library resources through their library's website from outside the library (e.g. from home, school, or work). Of those respondents,

- **2,442 (53%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **1,256 (27%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **919 (20%)** did so less than once a month.

2,480 (45%) of respondents accessed library resources through a handheld mobile device such as a cell phone, eReader, or tablet computer.

All together, **96% (5,249)** of respondents accessed library resources through their library's website either remotely or using the library's Internet connection. Some people may have accessed library resources using more than one method. Figure 1 shows the types of resources patrons accessed (if specified).

Figure 1 - Library resources accessed through the library website
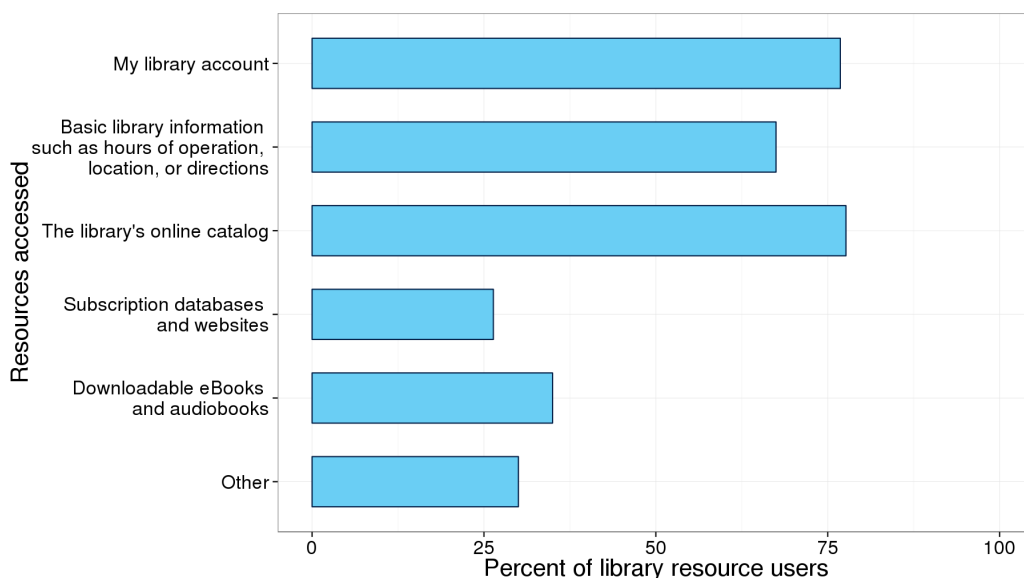
Use of public access computers and wireless network

Overall, 74% of survey respondents had used a public access computer or used a library's wireless network connection to access the Internet during the past 12 months. Using either means of access qualified respondents as *public access technology users*.

Of the respondents, **3,413 (62%) used a computer in their library to access the Internet during the past 12 months**, with frequencies as follows:

- **1,364 (40%)** did so once a week or more frequently;
- **639 (19%)** did so about 1-3 times a month;
- **1,410 (41%)** did so less than once a month.

2,740 (50%) had accessed their library's wireless network connection using their own computer. Of these respondents,

- **872 (32%)** used their library's wireless network once a week or more frequently;
- **673 (25%)** used their library's wireless network about 1-3 times a month;
- **1,195 (44%)** used their library's wireless network less than once a month.

Alternate access to computers outside the library

Public access to the Internet is extremely important for people who don't have access elsewhere. However, even those who have access at home, work, or school use computers in the library to access the Internet for a variety of reasons. **79% of users reported having regular personal access to a computer and the Internet somewhere other than the library**. **30%** of public access technology users are aware of any other location in the community with free access to computers and the internet.

National research has shown that a major reason people with alternative means of access rely on their library for access to computers and the Internet is that they do so while traveling. Of the users surveyed, **838 (21%) reported they had used a library computer or wireless Internet connection while out-of-town during the past 12 months**.

In addition to use while traveling, research has shown that there are several other reasons that drive people with alternative means of access to use technology resources at the library:

- **Lack of access to high speed Internet at home:** Library Internet allows people to download large files or websites requiring a high speed connection.
- **Gaps in access:** Such as when moving or during power outages.
- **Household competition:** Especially among youth, competition with siblings or parents over a single household computer drives users to the library.
- **A change of scenery:** People who work at home sometimes use library computers and wireless to get out of the house. Job seekers also use computers in the library to maintain a normal schedule and stay connected to the community.
- **During lunch breaks or while out running errands:** People stop in to check email, look up phone numbers or directions, or other quick tasks.
- **As a supplement to the library catalog:** Users look up book reviews, reading lists, and other aids for selecting materials.

Using the library's technology resources on behalf of others

The beneficiaries of library Internet access often extend beyond the individual users; at North Carolina state libraries, **50% (2,016) of users found information or performed tasks for other people using their library's computers or Internet connection**.

Overall uses of public access technology

Public access technology at North Carolina state libraries was used by patrons to access a variety of networked or web-based tools. The most frequently accessed of these tools by public access technology users were search engines (71%). Figure 2 shows tools users accessed over the past 12 months.

Figure 2 - Tools accessed by patrons using their library's computers or Internet connection
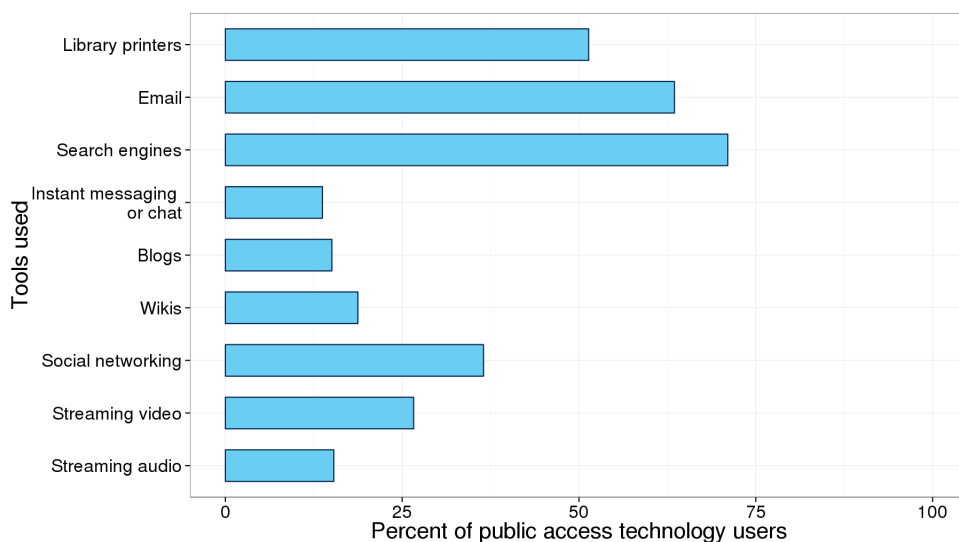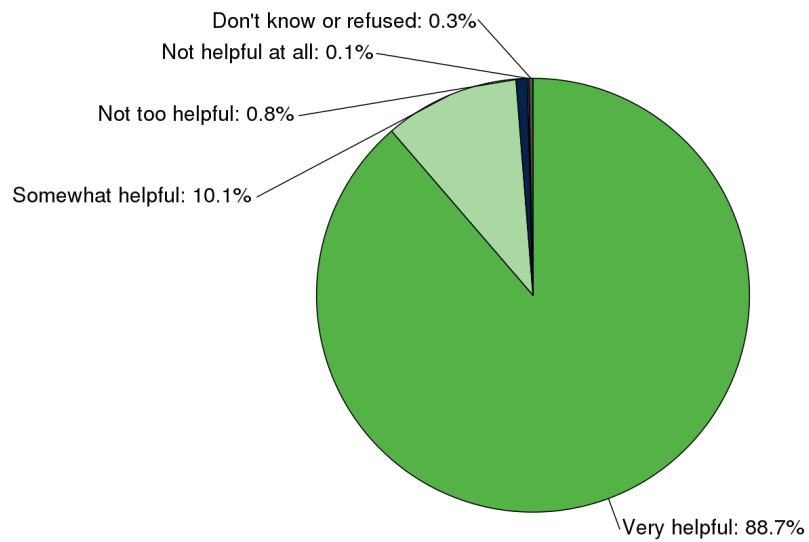

Help and training

Another main reason people come to the library to use computers and the Internet is to receive help and training from a librarian or library staff. **65% of public access technology users reported having received one-on-one technology help from library staff or volunteers in the past 12 months.** The most frequent type of help these users received was for library computer services (74%). Figure 3 shows types of help that users received.

Figure 3 - Type of help received from library staff or volunteers
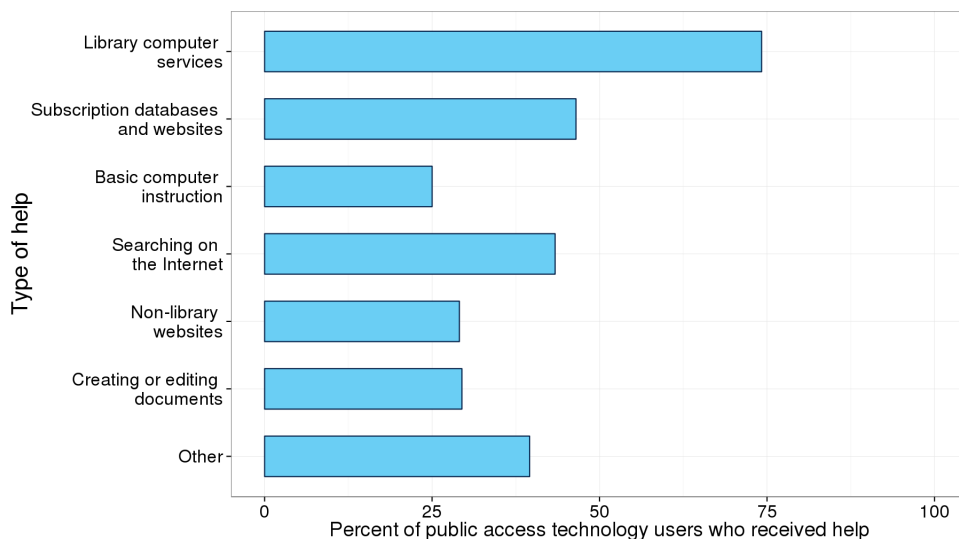
Those that received help at their library were asked about the helpfulness of library staff and volunteers. Figure 4 shows how users rated the help they received.

Figure 4 - User ratings of library technology help received

Don't know or refused: 0.3%
Not helpful at all: 0.1%
Not too helpful: 0.8%
Somewhat helpful: 10.1%
Very helpful: 88.7%

In addition, 14% (574) of public computer users took advantage of computer-related training or classes at the library. *Note that this question was not asked of nonusers; North Carolina libraries may have patrons who take computer-related training classes but otherwise do not use the library's computers or Internet connection.

Public access technology uses by activity area

Access to computers and the Internet, coupled with the technology help and training available at public libraries around the country, is essential to helping people satisfy their information needs and perform tasks in a variety of areas. National research about how the public uses computers and the Internet in libraries has shown that people use public access computers to accomplish a variety of instrumental social, educational, and economic tasks.

The Impact Survey asked users about how they used public library computers, Internet, and wireless networks across several areas of activity, or domains: education, employment, entrepreneurship, health & wellness, eGovernment, civic engagement, eCommerce, and social inclusion. Using this framework, we can explore how the availability of public access technology in libraries impacts the many and varied aspects of users' daily lives. The following pages provide detail and deeper insight into the uses and outcomes of public access technology at libraries in North Carolina across these domains. Figure 5 shows the overall use of public access technology in those areas; the following sections further detail their activities.
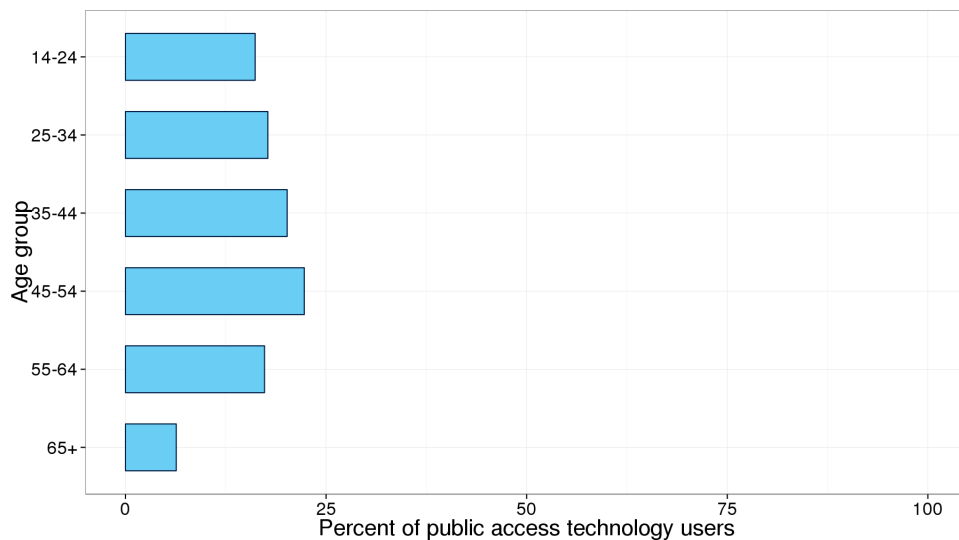
Figure 5 - Public computer use by area
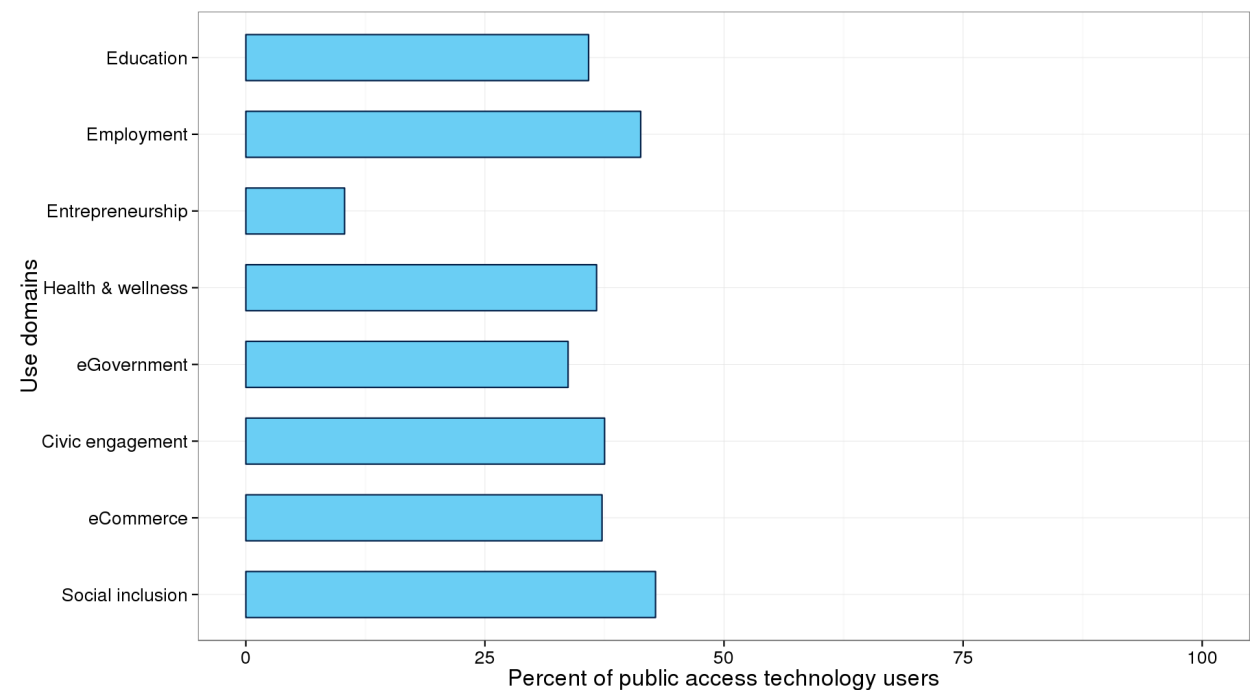
Education

In North Carolina state, **36%** of public access technology users indicated they had used public library computers or wireless network for educational purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 22%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 6 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for education

Highlights:

- **302** users applied for degree or certificate program; of those, 84 were admitted to the program.
- **11%** of users took a school-related test online; of those, 20% had a librarian serve as a proctor.
- **278** users applied for financial aid; of those, 72 received financial aid.

Table 1 details the education tasks public access technology users reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 1: Education activities

	% of users	n
Learned about a degree or certificate program	17%	705
Applied for a degree or certificate program	7%	302
Was admitted to the program	2%	84
Took an online class or workshop	13%	517
Did research for a class	23%	942
Completed coursework or homework	22%	890
Took any school-related test online	11%	428
Librarian served as a proctor	2%	84
Applied for financial aid for education	7%	278
Received financial aid for education	2%	72

Employment

41% of public access technology users at North Carolina state libraries reported they had used library resources for employment or career purposes in the past 12 months. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 26%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 7 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for employment
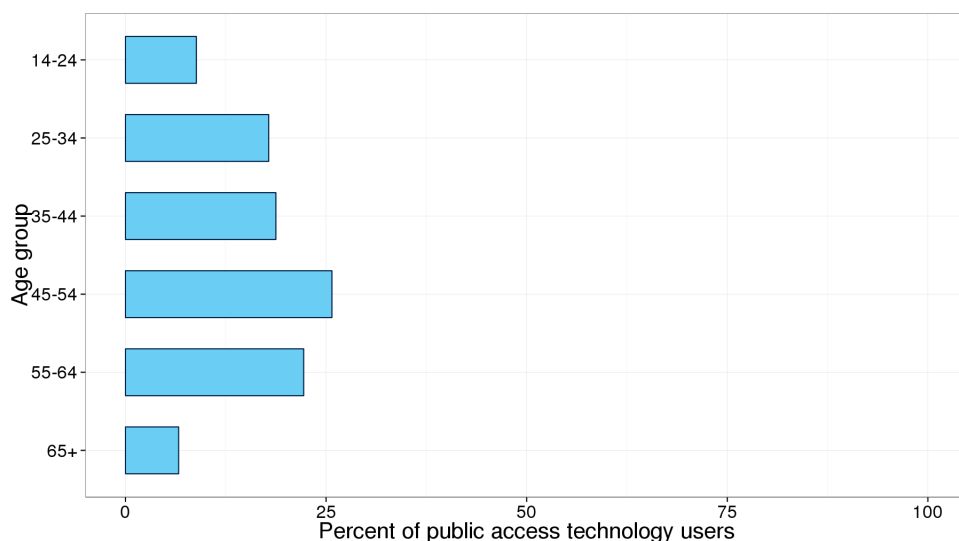
Highlights:

- **27%** of users used their library's technology resources to apply for a job.
- **14%** were granted an interview, and **8%** were hired for a new position.

Table 2 details additional employment tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 2: Employment activities

	% of users	n
Looked for a job	34%	1,384
Applied for a job or sent out a resume	27%	1,089
Got an interview	14%	554
Was hired	8%	344
Worked on a resume	26%	1,051
Received skill-based training	15%	602
Found information related to a job or profession	29%	1,159
Did work for a current job	19%	766

Entrepreneurship

By providing public access technology services, libraries often contribute to the economic health of the community by supporting the small business community. **10%** of the public access technology users at North Carolina state libraries reported they had used library resources for entrepreneurship purposes in the past 12 months. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 26%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 8 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for entrepreneurship
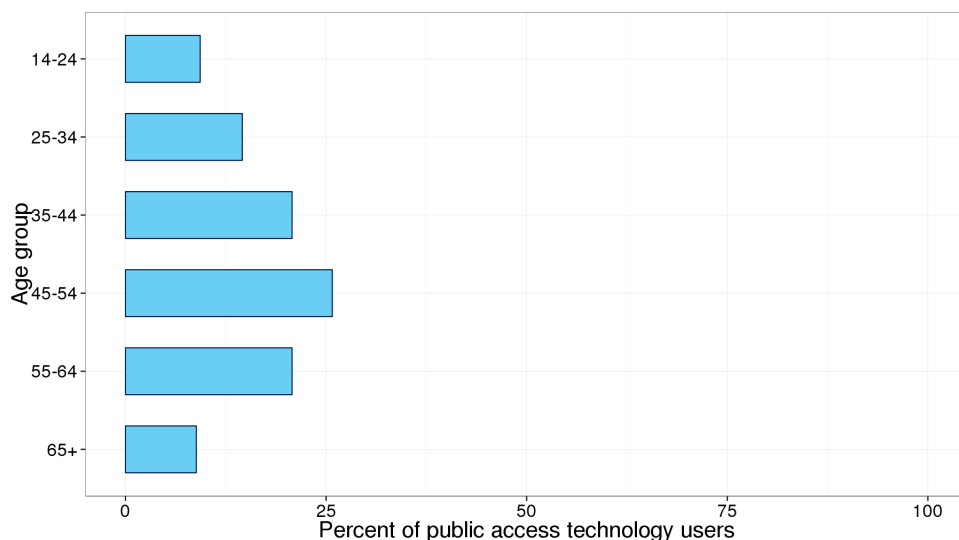
The most commonly reported entrepreneurial activity performed by users at North Carolina libraries was to perform business-related research (8%). Table 3 details the entrepreneurship tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 3: Entrepreneurship activities

	% of users	n
Started their own business	4%	172
Managed an existing business	5%	223
Performed business-related research	8%	321
Found potential customers	5%	208
Found business-to-business contract opportunities	5%	217

Health and wellness

Increasingly, finding health information and conducting many health-related service transactions, including signing up for insurance through government insurance exchanges, means going online. **37%** of users at North Carolina state libraries indicated they had used their library's computers or Internet connection for health or wellness purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 25%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 9 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for health and wellness
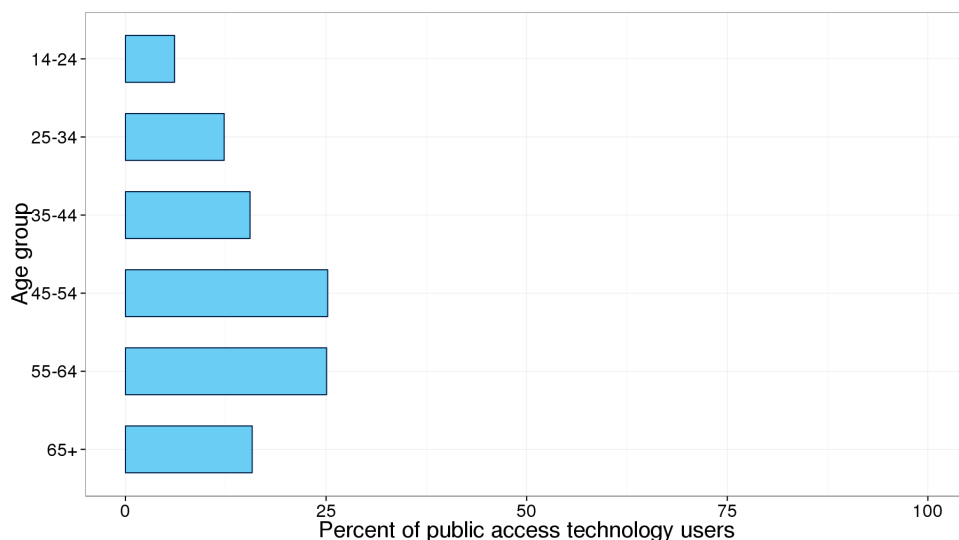
Highlights:

- **25%** of users reported learning about diet or nutrition; of those, 86% made a change to their diet.
- **22%** of users reported learning about exercise or fitness; of those, 85% made a change in their exercise habits.

Table 4 details the health and wellness tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 4: Health and wellness activities

	% of users	n
Learned about an illness, disease, or medical condition	31%	1,242
Learned about a medical procedure	21%	869
Found online or in-person support groups for a health need	6%	234
Learned about prescription or over-the-counter drugs	20%	825
Found information about a doctor or other health care provider	20%	809
Accessed medical records	6%	247
Bought insurance or enrolled in a drug discount program	8%	325
Learned about diet or nutrition	25%	1,010
Made a decision about diet changes	21%	867
Learned about exercise or fitness	22%	887
Made changes in exercise habits	19%	751

eGovernment

Libraries play a significant role in connecting citizens with essential eGovernment services. **34%** of users at North Carolina state libraries used their library's computers and Internet connection for eGovernment purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 26%, were between the ages of 55-64.

Figure 10 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for eGovernment

Percent of public access technology users
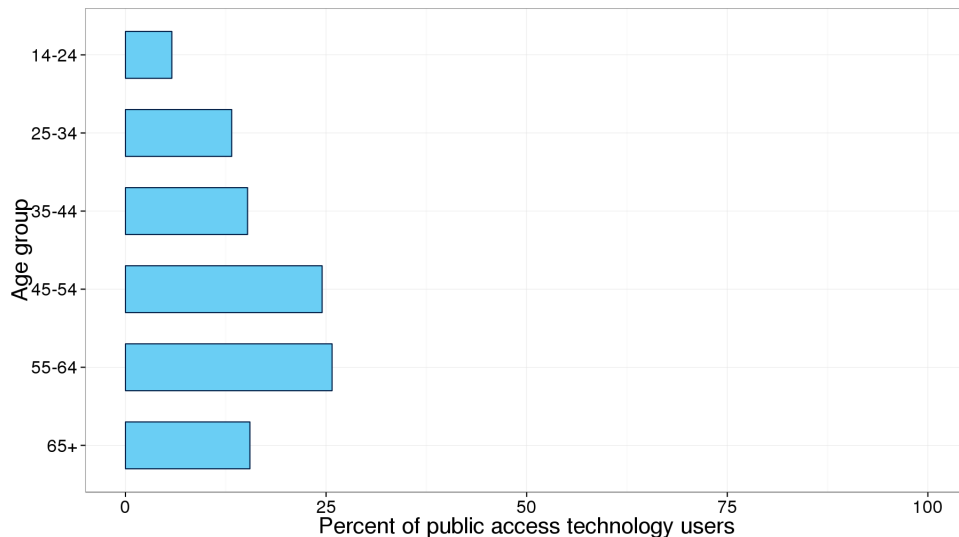
Highlights:

- **19%** of users got government forms online; of those, 49% submitted those forms online.
- **12%** of users learned about permits/licenses; of those, 30% applied for that permit/license.

Table 5 details the eGovernment tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 5: eGovernment activities

	% of users	n
Got help from a government official or agency	17%	693
Learned about local, state, or federal laws or regulations	21%	872
Found advice or assistance with a legal question or problem	15%	603
Accessed the justice system	10%	395
Got government forms	19%	789
Submitted forms online	9%	384
Learned about government programs or services	23%	934
Applied for government programs or services	9%	346
Learned about permits or licenses	12%	499
Applied for a permit or license	4%	148

Civic engagement

Public libraries support civic engagement by providing a venue and resources for citizens to engage with their community. **38%** of public access technology users surveyed at North Carolina state libraries reported using their library's computers or Internet connection for civic engagement purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 23%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 11 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for civic engagement
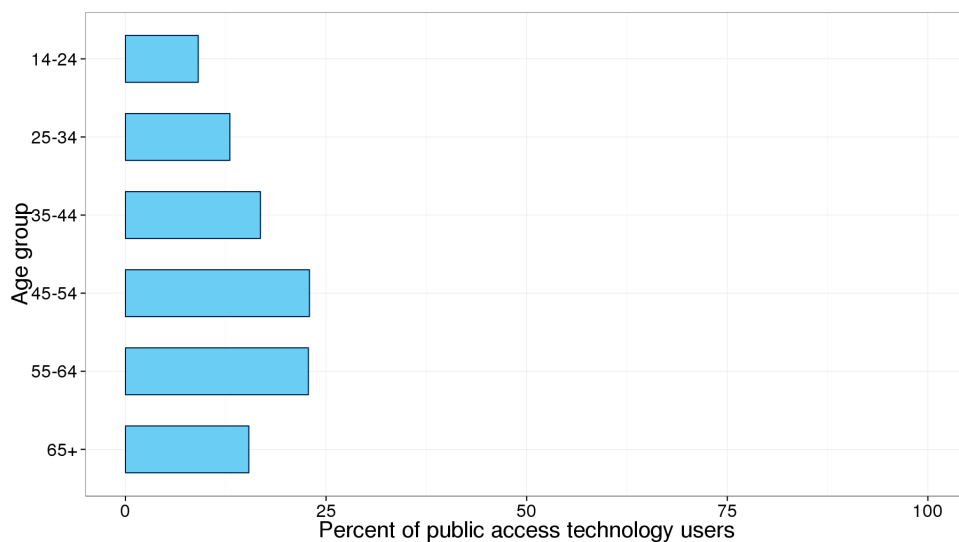
Highlights:

- **24%** of users learned about a political activity/candidate or social cause; of those, 59% got involved with a political activity, candidate, or cause.

Table 6 details the civic engagement tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 6: Civic engagement activities

	% of users	n
Kept up with current news/events	33%	1,334
Learned about a political activity, candidate, or social cause	24%	993
Got involved with a political activity, candidate, or cause	15%	590
Participated in a civic or community group	13%	519
Organized/managed a club, civic/community/church group, or non-profit	7%	295

eCommerce

Public libraries provide patrons with the means to engage in a wide variety of eCommerce activities. Consumers connected to the Internet are able to find and compare products and services, leaving those without access at a disadvantage when it comes to making informed financial decisions. **37%** of technology users at libraries in North Carolina indicated they had used a public library computer or Internet connection for eCommerce purposes. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 24%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 12 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for eCommerce
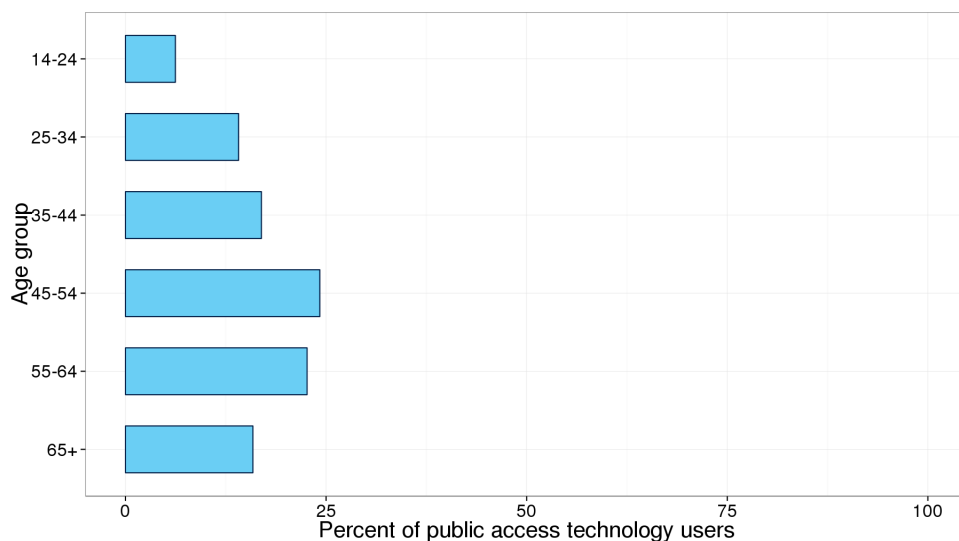
The most commonly reported eCommerce activity performed by users at North Carolina libraries was to research or compare products/services (27%). Table 7 details the eCommerce tasks patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Table 7: eCommerce activities

|	% of users	n
Learned about getting out of debt	9%	350
Banked online	22%	885
Paid bills	18%	747
Got investment information	7%	294
Looked up credit rating	8%	330
Researched or compared products/services	27%	1,081
Purchased online	22%	889
Sold online	6%	253
Made travel arrangements	23%	922
Found housing	9%	382

Social inclusion

Patrons use public access technology to stay in touch with family and friends, and to build and maintain social networks. **43%** of technology users at libraries in North Carolina reported having used their library's computers or Internet connection for a social purpose. The majority of users who engaged in this activity, 23%, were between the ages of 45-54.

Figure 13 - Ages of patrons using public access technology for social inclusion
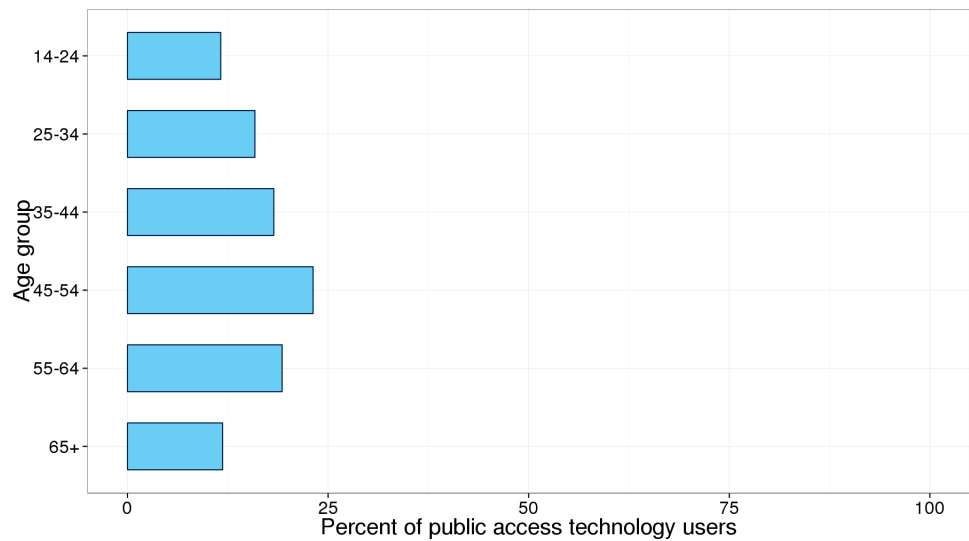
The most commonly reported social activity performed by users at North Carolina libraries was to communicate with friends and family (38%). Figure 14 details the types of social inclusion activities patrons reported engaging in during the past 12 months.

Figure 14 - Social inclusion activities
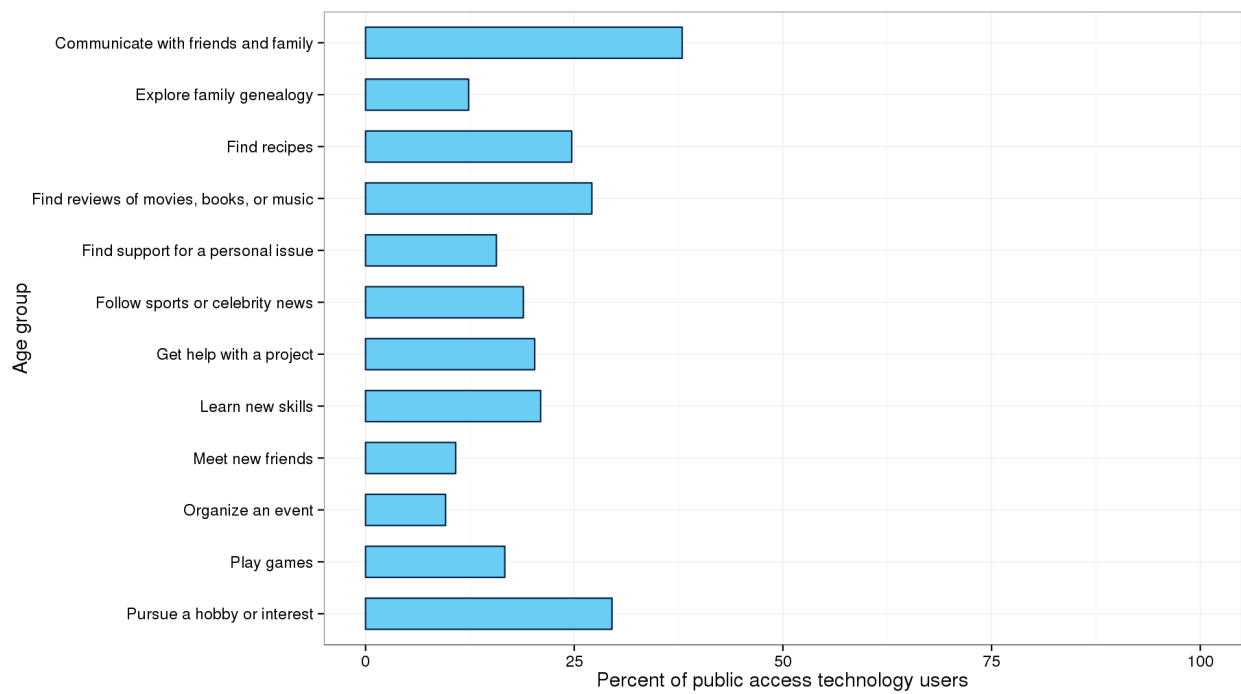
Importance of computer resources

All survey respondents were asked about the importance of free access to computers and the Internet for themselves and their community. 62% of respondents reported that public computing resources are important or very important to themselves, personally; 89% felt that these resources are important or very important to have available for others in the community.

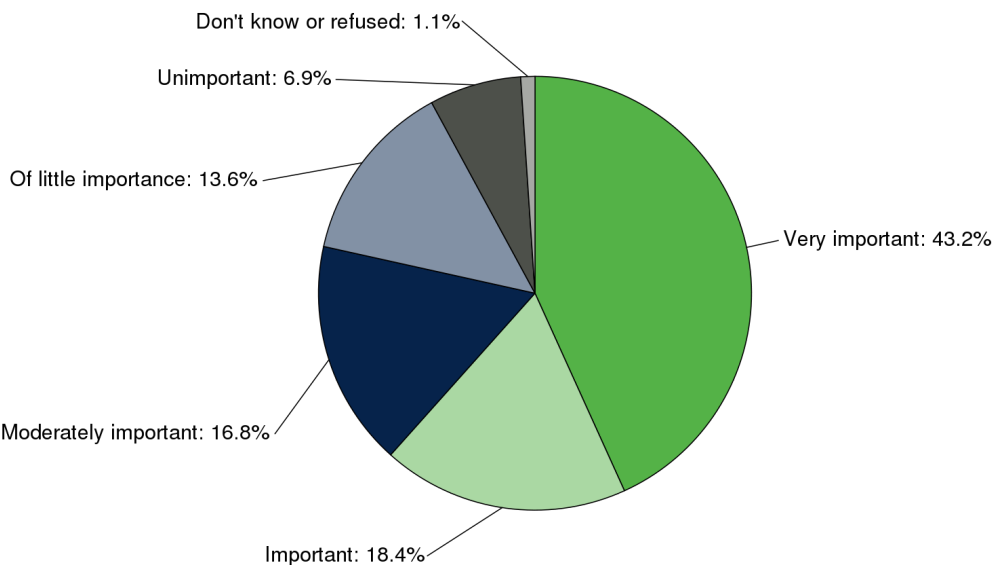Figure 15 - Public access technology importance (personal)

Don't know or refused: 1.1%
Unimportant: 6.9%
Of little importance: 13.6%
Very important: 43.2%
Moderately important: 16.8%
Important: 18.4%

Figure 16 - Public access technology importance (personal) - among public access technology users

Don't know or refused: 0.5%
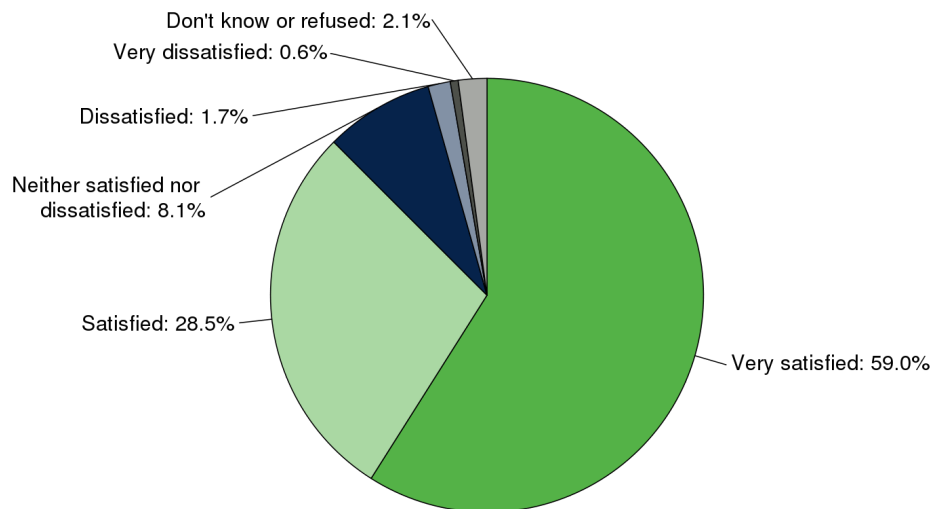Unimportant: 1.8%
Of little importance: 8.7%
Moderately important: 16.7%
Very important: 51.9%
Important: 20.4%
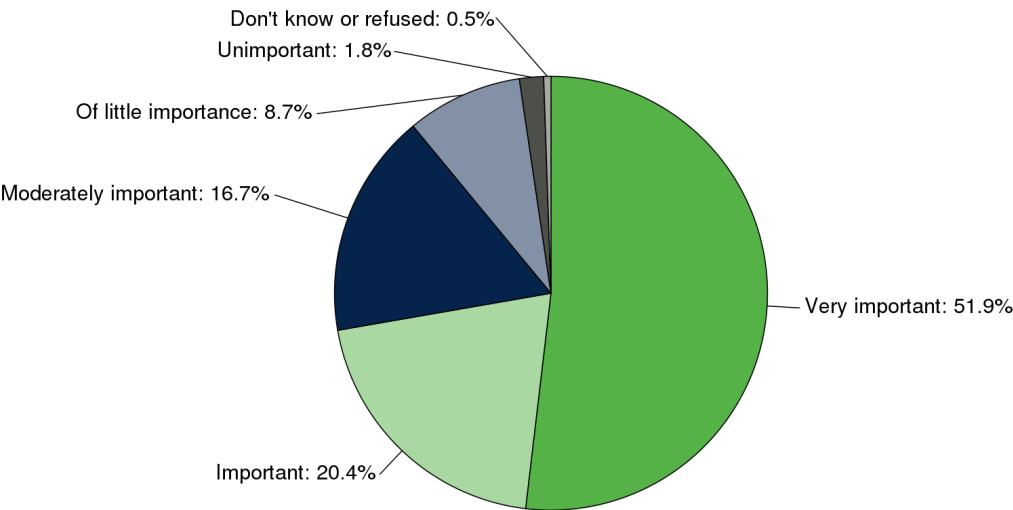
Figure 17 - Public access technology importance (community)

Don't know or refused: 1.6%
Unimportant: 1.2%
Of little importance: 2.0%
Moderately important: 6.1%
Important: 17.4%
Very important: 71.7%
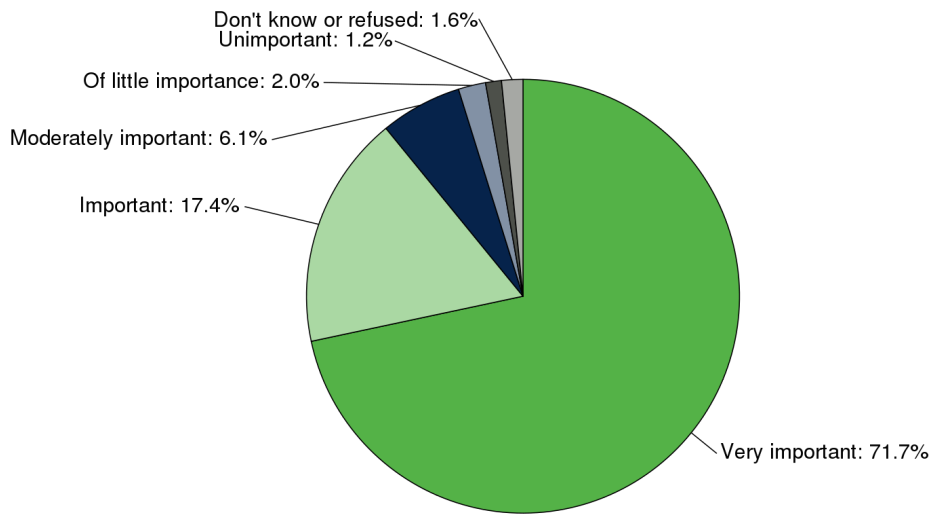
Patron Satisfaction

When asked about their level of satisfaction with their library's public access technology, 65% of public access technology users at libraries in North Carolina state said that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the access provided at their library (Figure 18).

Figure 18 - Patron satisfaction with public access technology resources and services

Don't know or refused: 2.1%
Very dissatisfied: 0.6%
Dissatisfied: 1.7%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied: 8.1%
Satisfied: 28.5%
Very satisfied: 59.0%

Demographic Information

The following figures provide demographic information about survey respondents from North Carolina state libraries.
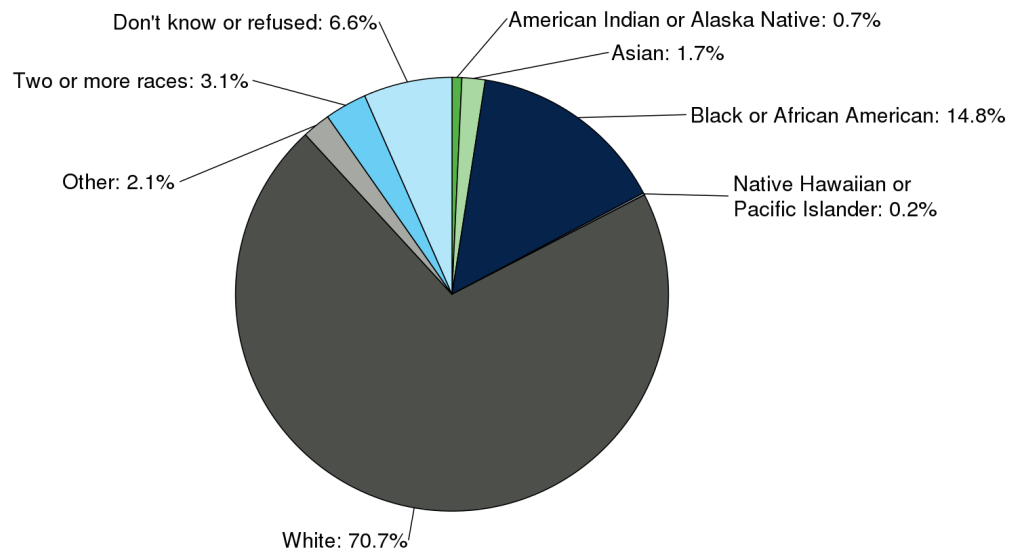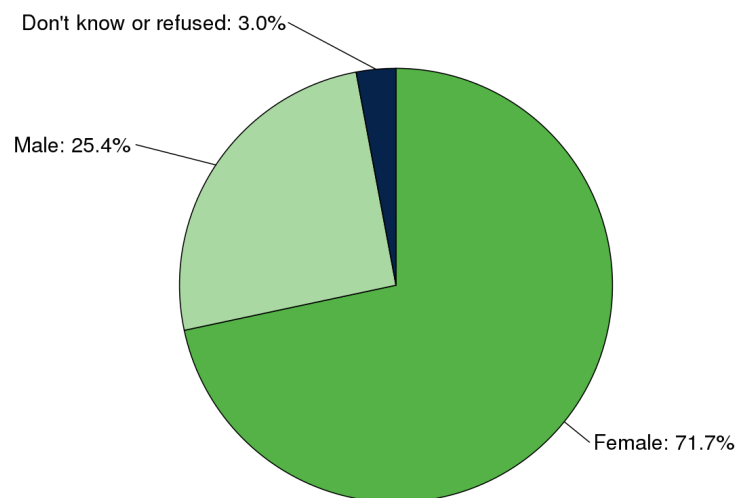
Figure 19 - Survey respondents by race

Don't know or refused: 6.6%

American Indian or Alaska Native: 0.7%

Asian: 1.7%

Two or more races: 3.1%

Black or African American: 14.8%

Other: 2.1%

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander: 0.2%

White: 70.7%

Figure 20 - Survey respondents by sex

Don't know or refused: 3.0%

Male: 25.4%

Female: 71.7%

Figure 21 - Survey respondents by age

Figure 21 - Survey respondents by age

14-24: 6.8%
65+: 21.2%
25-34: 12.7%
35-44: 16.6%
55-64: 22.2%
45-54: 20.4%
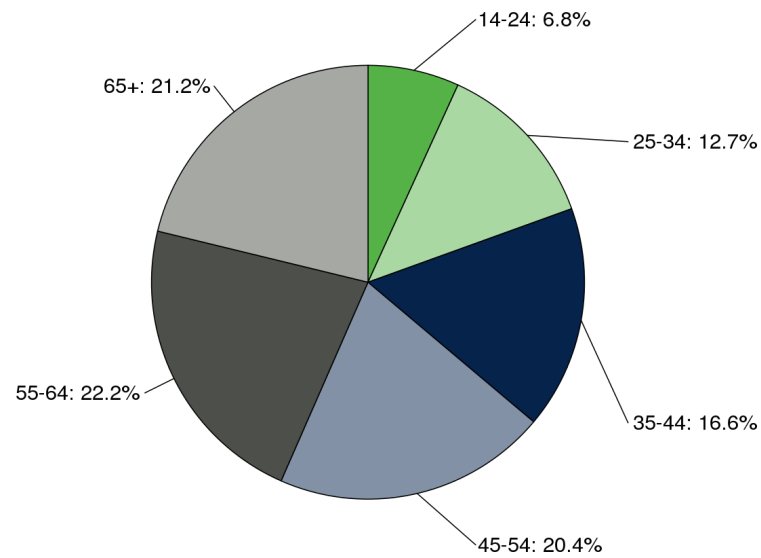
Figure 22 - Survey respondents by education level

Figure 22 - Survey respondents by education level

Don't know or refused: 3.6%
Grade school: 0.9%
Some high school: 3.2%
High school or GED: 9.2%
Postgraduate study: 27.5%
Some college: 16.6%
2 year or vocational degree: 12.3%
4 year degree: 26.7%
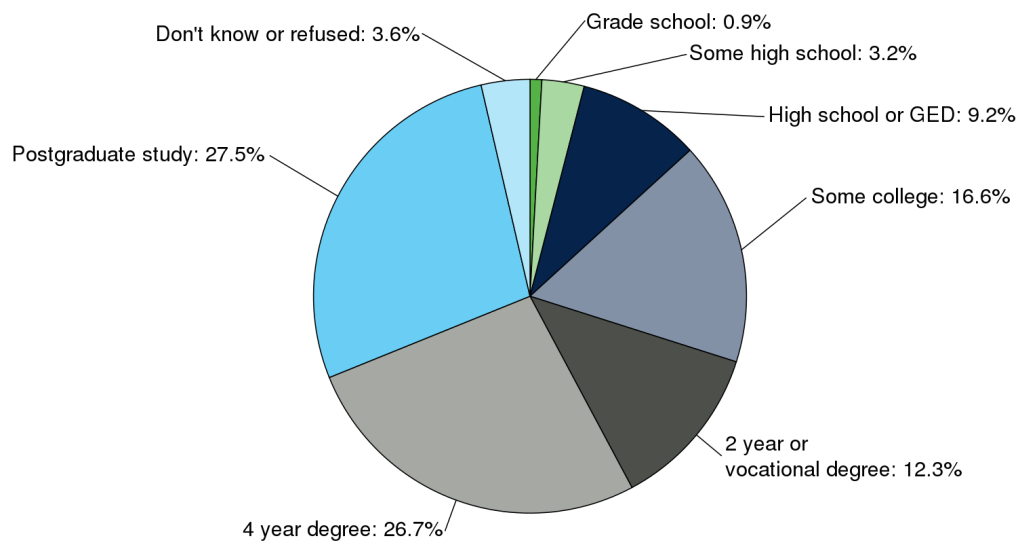
Figure 23 - Language spoken at home

Language other than English: 10.7%

Don't know or refused: 1.9%

English: 87.4%
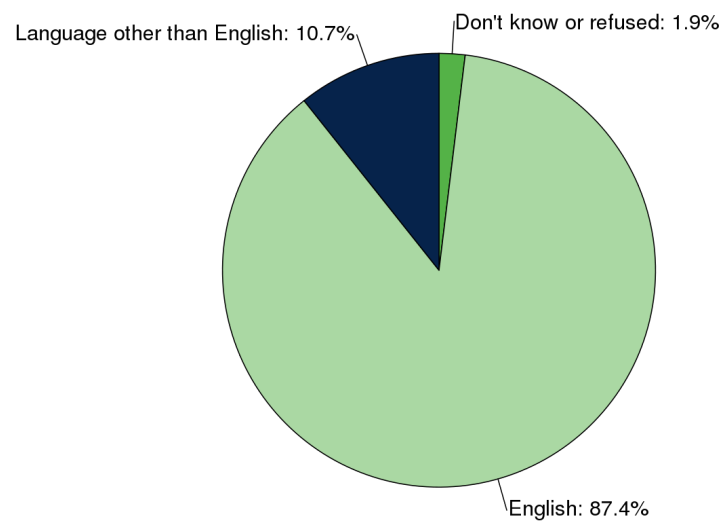
Figure 24 - Survey language

Spanish: 0.1%

English: 99.9%
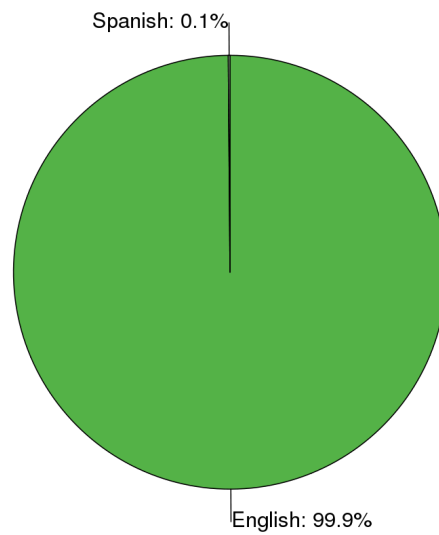
Figure 25 - Citizenship status

Don't know or refused: 2.2%
Not planning to
become a citizen: 0.3%

Planning to apply
for citizenship: 0.7%

Currently applying
for citizenship: 0.2%

U.S. citizen: 96.5%
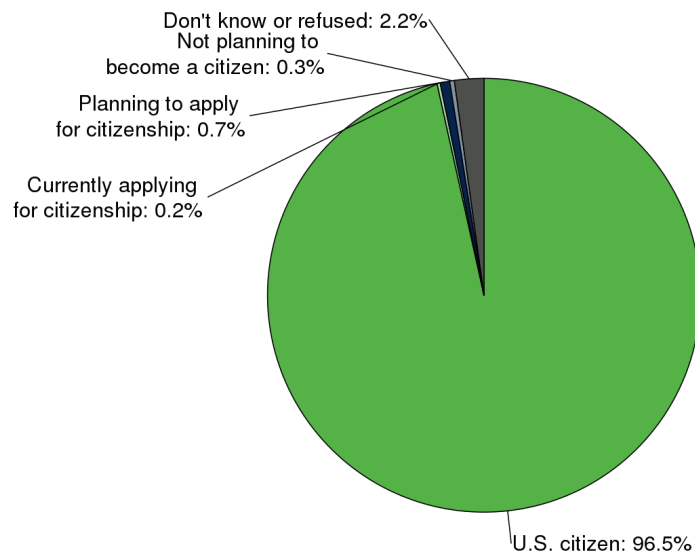
Figure 26 - Income as percent of household poverty level

<100%: 10.8%

100-199%: 14.4%

Don't know or refused: 25.9%

200-299%: 13.7%

>500%: 14.8%

400-499%: 8.3%

300-399%: 11.9%
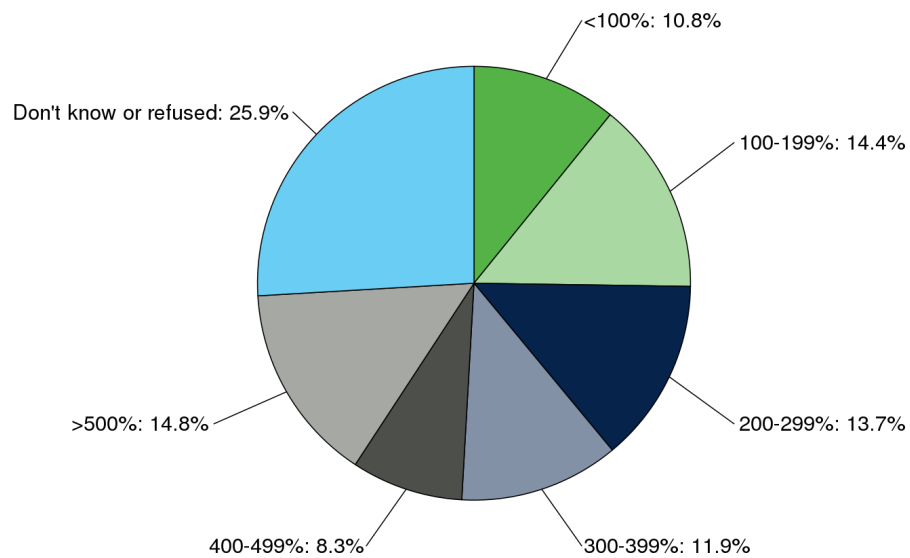
Respondent income is presented as a percent of the US poverty limits. Below you can view a table of how income ranges and percentages are defined, depending on family size.

Table 8: 2013 Poverty Guidelines, ROUNDED to nearest $10,000

| Family size | Income as percent of United States poverty limits | | | | |
| | **100%** | **200%** | **300%** | **400%** | **500%** |
	Income amount				
1	$11,000	$23,000	$34,000	$46,000	$57,000
2	$15,000	$31,000	$47,000	$62,000	$78,000
3	$2,0000	$39,000	$59,000	$78,000	$98,000
4	$24,000	$47,000	$71,000	$94,000	$118,000
5	$28,000	$55,000	$83,000	$110,000	$138,000
6	$32,000	$63,000	$95,000	$126,000	$158,000
7	$36,000	$71,000	$107,000	$142,000	$178,000
8	$40,000	$79,000	$119,000	$159,000	$198,000

*From US. Health & Human Services Computations for the 2013 Annual Update of the HHS Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia. Available at: https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/01/24/2013-01422/annual-update-of-the-hhs-poverty-guidelines

Conclusion

We hope that this report has given you useful information about your state's libraries' public access technology users. Linking this information with higher level policy goals and current, relevant concerns in your library's community will help demonstrate the value that the public library and free technology resources and services bring to your community. Suggestions for framing your advocacy efforts in a way that shows the value and political importance of the libraries' services to policymakers, funders, and the public can be found on the Impact Survey website at http://impactsurvey.org.